



NEWS RELEASE

City of New Rochelle, New York

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PHOTO AND VIDEO OPPORTUNITY
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New Inductees for New Rochelle “Walk of Fame”

June 11 ceremony celebrates achievements of Mariano Rivera, Fritz Pollard

Two new members will be inducted into the “Walk of Fame” at Library Green on Friday, June 11 at 11AM: baseball great **Mariano Rivera** and former NFL player **Fritz Pollard**. The public is invited to join City officials and the friends and family members of the honorees for the ceremony in Ruby Dee Park at Library Green. (In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony will take place in the New Rochelle Public Library’s Ossie Davis Theater.)

The New Rochelle Walk of Fame, installed in 2011 in Library Green, is a unique tribute to nationally notable individuals with distinct ties to New Rochelle. Each inductee is memorialized with a 20” x 14” full color historical interpretive sign telling his or her story in words and graphics. The Walk is a micro history of America in a nutshell as reflected in the lives of New Rochelle’s famous sons and daughters, representing the arts, business, politics, education, the media, entertainment, and sports. The signs are strategically located in the gardens lining the Library Green pathway and were created and funded by former resident and historian Roderick Kennedy Jr., working in partnership with the City of New Rochelle and the Downtown Business Improvement District. *A list of inductees follows below.*

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Mariano Rivera

In 2019, Mariano Rivera was the first player ever inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame by unanimous vote. Rivera played for the New York Yankees from 1995 to 2013 as a relief pitcher nicknamed “Sandman” and “The Closer.” He posted 652 saves, struck out 1,173 batters, and achieved an ERA of 2.21.

His career highlights include being named to 13 American League All-Star teams, playing on five World Series Championship teams, World Series MVP in 1999, five-time Rolaids Relief Man Awards winner, three-time Delivery Man of the Year and three-time MLB saves leader. In 2013, the Yankees retired his uniform number 42 that he wore in honor of Jackie Robinson. In 2016, he was awarded a plaque in Monument Park, and in 2019 the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Born on November 29, 1969, he was raised in the Panamanian fishing village of Puerto Caimito where as a youth he learned the fishing trade. He began practicing baseball using a mitt made

from cardboard and bats fashioned from tree-branches. With the encouragement of his family and girlfriend Clara, who would become his wife, his persistence and practice led to his signing with the New York Yankees.

In 1995, as a young ballplayer, Rivera became friends with Joe Fosina whose company oversees the Yankees' uniforms. Their friendship led to New Rochelle becoming his adopted home. He lived here for nine years at both Harbor House and the Greencroft Apartments on Pelham Road. In 2014, he opened the doors to Refugio de Esperanza, "Refuge of Hope," a Pentecostal congregation where Clara Rivera is the Senior Pastor. The building was built in 1901 as the North Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Mariano Rivera Foundation paid over three million dollars to renovate the building.

Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard

Pollard was the first African American head coach in the National Football League (NFL) and along with Bobby Marshall, were the first two African American players in the NFL in 1920. Sportswriter Walter Camp ranked Pollard as "one of the greatest runners these eyes have ever seen."

Pollard played with the Akron Pros, the team he would lead to the NFL (APFA) championship in 1920. In 1921, he became the co-head coach of the Akron Pros while still maintaining his roster position as running back. He also played for several other teams and coached the Gilberton Cadamounts, a non-NFL team and served as head coach for the Hammond Pros.

At the end of the 1926 season, Pollard, along with all nine of the black players in the NFL were removed from the league, never to return again. After that he spent some time organizing all-black barnstorming teams, including the Chicago Black Hawks in 1928 and the Harlem Brown Bombers in the 1930s.

After football, he went on to other ventures including a talent agency, tax consulting and film and music production. From 1935 to 1942, he published the first black-owned newspaper in New York City, the *New York Independent News*.

Born in Chicago on January 27, 1894, he attended Albert Grannis Lane Manual Training High School where he played football, baseball, and ran track. He attended Brown University on full scholarship, majoring in chemistry and playing half-back on the Brown football team which went to the 1916 Rose Bowl. He was the first black football player at Brown, the first black player to play the Rose Bowl, and the first black running back to be named to the Walter Camp All-America team.

In 1954, Pollard was the first African-American elected to the National College Football Hall of Fame. He was elected to the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 1967. In 1981, he received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Brown University. In 2005, the football pioneer received a long-overdue honor with his election to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His name lives on through the Fritz Pollard Alliance that was founded in 2003 to help promote the hiring of minorities in the NFL.

Pollard retired to New Rochelle in 1961, living here until 1983 when he moved to Silver Springs, MD to live with his son Fritz Jr. and his wife.

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